Outstanding amount of MTNL

3222. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the total outstanding amount which MTNL has to recover from the subscribers;

(b) in what manner the amount has been allowed to accumulate when the telephone of an average subscriber is disconnected on non-payment of a bill; and

(c) whether any responsibility has been fixed against the officers in this regard, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Total outstanding amount which MTNL has to recover from the subscribers is Rs. 1509.01 crores as on 31.10.2005.

(b) MTNL follows a prescribed procedure evolved over a long period of operation for the payment of bills and recovery of outstanding dues. Disconnection of telephone is also resorted to after all options to recover the outstanding amount have failed as per the prescribed procedure. Matter is pursued to recover the amount even after the disconnection of the telephone. Recently, agents have also been appointed to recover the outstanding dues. It may be mentioned that above outstanding is total oustanding amount since inception of the department.

(c) As a prescribed procedure is followed to recover the dues, individual responsibility can not be fixed.

Growth of telecome service in rural areas

3223. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Telecom Regulatory Authority of India nas released recommendations on growth of telecom service in rural India;

(b) whether according to regulator it is recognized that without focus on rural areas, sizeable growth in telecom sector would not be possible

and current policy would barely be able to achieve targeted 4 per cent rural development by the year 2010 even after giving huge subsidy support of around Rs. 30000 crore; and

(c) if so, the recommendations made by TRAI in this regard and how many of its recommendations have been accepted and thesteps being taken to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEELAHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has given its recommendations on 'Growth of Telecom Services in Rural India - the way forward' in October, 2005.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) TRAI in its recommendations has *inter alia* suggested that the focus of the Universal Service Obligation (USO) Policy should shift from subsidy based on individual Direct Exchange Lines (DELs), Village Public Telephones (VPT) to network infrastructure expansion approach. The salient features of TRAI's recommendations are as follows:-

- Sharing of infrastructure to received support from USO.
- Supporting backbone infrastructure through USO fund.
- Discount in Annual License Fee and Spectrum Charges linked with Rural Coverage.
- Development of suitable applications.
- Reduction of rural VSAT license fee and spectrum charges and provision of transponders at affordable rates.
- No right of way charges for networks in rural areas.
- Niche Operators to be supported from USOF and exemption from spectrum charges.
- No spectrum fees for usage of CorDECT and similar technologies in rural areas as well as for usage of 450 MHz.
- No prior SACFA clearance for development of towers upto 40 m. in rural areas.
- Funds collected as Universal Access levy should be made available to USOF.

The recommendations made by TRAI are currently under examination by the Government.